

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Highway Maintenance Programme 2026/2027 & 2025/2026 Highway Maintenance Update
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Council priority	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Committee notes the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement and provides scheme and spend approval.2. That the Committee note the progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme.3. That the Committee notes the completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Delivery Programme.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement, and to seek scheme and spend approval.
- 1.2 To update the Committee on the progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme.
- 1.3 To provide the Committee with an update on the completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Programme.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council's approved Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 2.2 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.

2.3 To provide a public highway network as safe and comfortable for all users as reasonably practicable having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

3. The Proposal

Background

3.1 As part of Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) an ambitious capital investment programme is being delivered. The Council is investing £8M, over 5-years (2022/23 to 2026/27) in Reading's local residential road and pavement network. There is £1M of Council investment remaining over and above the annual Local Transport Block funding for 2026/2027 from the Department for Transport (£2.873M).

3.2 The Council has and will continue to actively bid for appropriate external funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to maximise available funding to improve the condition of all highway assets.

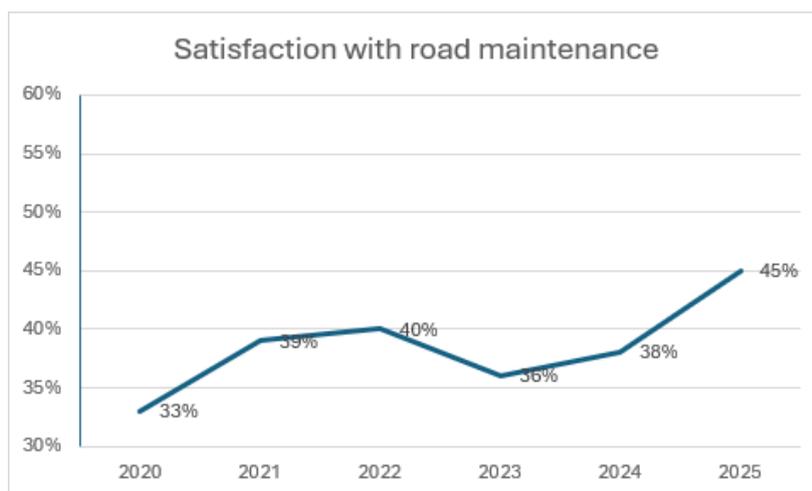
Proposed Programme - Highway Maintenance Spend Proposal 2026/2027

3.3 The Council carried out a Residents' Survey with its Citizen Panel during 2025 as part of the Council's on-going conversation with residents. The aim of the survey was to gather information to inform service delivery.

3.4 Residents were asked their views about local road maintenance and responded as follows:

Satisfaction - 45% (up from 38% last year, see below)

- Dissatisfaction - 40% (down from 46% last year)
- LGA comparison - satisfaction 35% (significantly lower); dissatisfaction 57% (significantly higher)



The NHT Survey confirms the improving satisfaction levels within Reading's road network since the Council investment in road maintenance started in 2020/21 financial year. Over 700 local residential roads (over 55%) have been surfaced since the start of the programme.

3.5 The annual National Highways & Transport MORI Residents Satisfaction Surveys for 2025 has shown that the Council has 138 national indicators being above average (up from 133 last year) and 122 indicators trending up / improving (up from 101), which remains above national trends. Reading remains above the national average for road

condition and in dealing with road repairs. The Council recognises that there has been a huge amount of activity on the public highway this last year, not only during the extensive road resurfacing programmes but by utility companies carrying out urgent and planned repairs.

- 3.6 Our residential (unclassified roads) have improved from 35% green (good) condition to 79% green (good) condition and the on-going investment by the Council will enable maintenance of a steady state of good condition roads. The remaining residential unclassified roads are in an 'Yellow Condition' which are roads that are showing deterioration and will be considered for surfacing during 2026/27 financial year to prolong the life of the road. The Council does not have any entire roads in 'Red Poor Condition' on the residential unclassified 'U' roads, albeit we have clusters of potholes / red on some roads resulting in the road condition indicator showing less than 1% overall Red condition roads on our unclassified (residential local) road network.
- 3.7 The additional DfT LTP Award for Bridges & Carriageways of £2.873M for 2026/27, (including £754k incentive funding which the Council has been awarded), will further assist the Council's ambition in bringing its roads to a good overall condition. Future funding allocations will facilitate maintenance of this good position in future years.

Breakdown of 4-year DfT award for Bridges & Carriageways (2026/27 to 2029/30):

	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029	2029/2030
Baseline Award	£ 2,119,000	£ 2,368,000	£ 2,628,000	£ 3,132,000
Incentive Funding	£ 754,000	£ 1,009,000	£ 1,013,000	£ 1,030,000
Total	£ 2,873,000	£3,377,000	£ 3,641,000	£ 4,162,000

The Council's total DfT Award over the 4 years to 2029/30 is £14,053,000 (including incentive funding element)

- 3.8 This settlement covers general headings of Carriageway Maintenance, Pothole Reduction, and Bridge / Structural Maintenance. The Highway Authority then needs to demonstrate that it has made suitable use of their allocation in accordance with highway needs and within the general criteria for which LTP maintenance funding is allocated.
- 3.9 The Council's additional investment along with the DfT Grant Awards will deliver a total investment of £4.035M in local residential roads, pavements, bridges and structures during financial year 2026/27, as set out in the table below:

	2025/26 Spend (Works Only)	2026/27 Spend Proposal (Works Only)
Residential Roads Surfacing	£4,306,000	£2,040,000
Pavement / Footway Resurfacing	£ 150,000	£200,000
Bridges / Structures / Streetlighting	£ 1,150,000	£ 1,100,000
Streetlighting	£753,000	£495,000
Contribution to Council's Tree Planting programme	£100,000	£ 100,000

Lead Local Flood Reduction	£100,000	£100,000
TOTAL	£6,559,000	£ 4,035,000

3.10 With the funding available Officers have prioritised schemes based on nationally accepted technical assessment processes as well as visual engineering assessments, further detail is provided below:

Major and Residential Road / Carriageway Resurfacing 2026/27 (£2,040,000)

3.11 The provisional programme for category 1 and 2 roads; which are mainly class A and class B classified roads, and roads with high volumes of commercial traffic - Road treatment is prioritised after assessment of carriageways using information from:

- SCANNER surveys which check the structural integrity and residual life of existing carriageways.
- SCRIM (sideways-force coefficient routine investigation machine) surveys to check skidding resistance.

Based on the above assessments the roads/sections of roads listed in Appendix 2 are proposed for treatment during the 2026/27 financial year. These will include 'Resurfacing' of 'classified' and other main roads, requiring the removal of the old road surface and replacement with a new 'warm mix' asphalt or appropriate alternative; as well as 'Preservation' of good condition classified and other main roads in a cost-effective material that extends the life of good condition roads.

To make the most effective use of the budget available, only the sections of the roads with a poor and deteriorating residual life, as identified from the SCANNER surveys and visual engineering assessments, will be prioritised and treated.

3.12 The tender for the programme will include reserve schemes so that in the event that actual costs are lower than current estimates, additional scheme(s) may be undertaken within the available budget. In the event of unforeseen carriageway deterioration on roads not currently on the list, the programme of works will be reviewed and if necessary, a reallocation of funding within the budgets will be made to undertake higher priority carriageway schemes.

3.13 For category 3 unclassified "U" roads (residential and other distributor roads) there is generally no skid or condition information available therefore maintenance priorities are established based on visual condition surveys. The common types of deterioration include, for example, the number of potholes, rutting, the amount of patching and cracking.

Surfacing (a thin microasphalt or surface dressing overlay) is predominantly used on the unclassified "U" local residential road network.

3.14 The visual survey assessment of the road surface condition for residential unclassified 'U' roads was carried out by our Highway Inspector team. The assessment process consists of scoring the carriageway condition against various criteria. Those roads with the highest scores are then subjected to a further engineering assessment and those which score highly again through this process are recommended for inclusion in the next financial year's road surfacing programme, subject to budget availability.

3.15 Based on the above, roads taken from the list of proposed schemes, currently 71 roads / sections of road, as detailed in Appendix 2 will be delivered during 2026/27. The

estimated costs are based on current contract rates. A tender will be let and awarded with works expected to take place during the summer months of 2026. The exact number of roads will depend on the tender return rates.

- 3.16 In the event of unforeseen carriageway deterioration outside of the scope of normal maintenance work, the programme of works will be reviewed and if necessary, a reallocation of funding within the budget will be made to facilitate higher priority carriageway schemes.
- 3.17 Due to the size of the 5-Year Council investment programme (2022/27), the Council continues to engage Statutory Undertakers / utility companies early to reduce the risk of newly resurfaced roads being dug up and also ensure that other planned major transport schemes are considered within the programme. The Council will also issue Section 58 Notices on the Major Classified Roads that are programmed for resurfacing. These legal notices help to protect the new surface as far as reasonably possible by preventing works by utility companies for up to 2-years, unless in an emergency or for a new connection.
- 3.18 A number of cycle routes that are located on residential road carriageways have been included within the proposed roads resurfacing programme.
- 3.19 It should also be noted that a number of local cycle routes are on classified main roads and will be prioritised for resurfacing. The annual highway maintenance programme has also considered improvements to routes identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Pavement / Footway Resurfacing (£200,000)

- 3.20 Potential footway surfacing and resurfacing schemes are identified as a result of visual condition surveys. Assessment of pavement surfaces are carried out on a rolling programme. The visual condition surveys are carried out at the same time as the cyclical road safety inspections with the frequency matching the highway inspection regime which depends on the hierarchical status of the road, with 3 monthly inspections of classified 'A Class' roads to 18 months inspection for residential 'U' unclassified roads. The assessment process consists of scoring the pavement condition against various criteria; those pavements with the highest scores, , are recommended for inclusion within the next financial year's Pavement Surfacing Programme, subject to budget availability. Refer to Appendix 2 for the proposed 2026/27 programme.
- 3.21 Officers will continue to split the focus of the Council's capital investment pavement programme between surfacing and/or reconstructing damaged pavements/stretches of pavements. Surfacing is done using a slurry sealant, rejuvenator or equivalent product, as this cost-effective process provides a new 'veneer' over the surface that seals and extends the life of pavements, thereby accelerating the Pavement Surfacing Programme. Both solutions will be delivered by the Council's in-house Highway Works Team.
- 3.22 The Council will continue to offer residents discounted vehicle crossings in residential roads where pavement works are being carried out, provided they are requested in advance and satisfy the Council's Vehicle Crossing Policy. To date we have installed 56 vehicle crossings as part of the pavement programmes, which aids affordability for the residents of Reading.
- 3.23 The Council is committed to reducing carbon as far as reasonably practicable with all contracts work, including innovation and highway tree planting where appropriate (considering underground services and sight line visibility/safety requirements), to support the Council's carbon reduction and bio-diversity ambitions. To date 615 trees have been planted, with a further 300 planned for winter 2026. The Council successfully trialled and purchased a fully electric road marking machine that uses cold applied, low carbon MMA (Methyl Methacrylate), as well as low carbon bitumen preservation materials that will

become 'business as usual' going forward. The Council will continue to explore, trial and bring low carbon alternatives to Reading.

3.24 The Council will continue to install pedestrian dropped crossings at road junctions on the pavements being resurfaced to improve accessibility for all users of the public highway. The Council recognises that Reading is a long-established town with historically older roads that were built at a time when accessibility was not considered during the design process. The Pavement Programme is an ideal opportunity to address this and to date 101 pedestrian crossings have been installed at road junctions.

3.25 There are roads which repeatedly do not meet the criteria for inclusion within the major carriageway or residential roads surfacing programmes but would benefit from other maintenance treatment(s) to extend the life of the asset. Examples of such maintenance works are explained in more detail below:

- Following a SCRIM (Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine) survey, where a carriageway surface appears, overall, to be in a good condition but would benefit from a surface preservation and retexturing to improve/restore skid resistance, extending the life of the road. This process would prove to be a cost-effective treatment, when compared with full scale resurfacing, enabling more roads to be treated.
- There are a number of concrete roads across the Borough which have previously been overlain with a thin flexible surfacing course. Over time this surfacing has locally worn away leaving a 'scabbed' surface. Typically, these areas do not meet the Council's current defect investigatory level to trigger repairs and if the underlying concrete slabs are in a stable condition, they are unlikely to increase in depth. Although such deterioration is aesthetically not pleasing, if the underlying concrete slabs are in reasonable condition, such roads do not score as highly as other roads for programmed maintenance work. Nevertheless, these roads would benefit from an appropriate treatment whereby the existing surfacing is either rejuvenated or replaced to not only improve the running surface but to also seal and protect the underlying concrete slabs, in turn, extending the life expectancy of these roads. Wensley Road was fully resurfaced in a proprietary surfacing product which is suitable for concrete roads.
- There are also examples of localised carriageway deterioration where the surfacing and/or sub-structure show signs of wear and tear in specific areas but not extensive enough to justify full-scale maintenance work to the complete carriageway area. In these situations, substantially sized patching, whether in the form of a surfacing only repair, a surfacing and base course repair or perhaps a greater depth full reconstruction repair, can rectify the issue locally and help to extend the overall life expectancy of the complete road.

Bridges & Structures 2026/2027 Programme (£ 1,100,000)

3.26 The Council has maintenance responsibility for around 80 bridges and 300 other structures. Each structure is inspected in line with the Code of Practice for Highway Structures. Based on these inspections, priority for works within the Capital Programme are determined and a rolling 5-year programme is developed and updated annually. Appendix 1 shows the bridges and structures schemes delivered by this investment during 2025/26. The proposed 2026/27 bridge and structures programme deliverable within the budget is listed in Appendix 2. Whilst these schemes are all high priority, they will not necessarily be completed in the order they are listed, as other factors must be considered when developing a scheme and programme to ensure they are achievable within the timescale / financial year. The current bridge backlog is managed by risk assessment, monitoring and if necessary interim measures, including implementing a weight limit, repair works and localised strengthening.

- 3.27 The Council continues to seek DfT funding to address the IDR bridge bearings and Berkeley Avenue strengthening schemes.

Street Lighting - LED streetlighting Capital Programme Update (£495,000)

- 3.28 The LED streetlighting upgrade programme has upgraded all the Council's standard streetlighting assets and delivered over 60% annual energy consumption savings to date. The Council's additional investment also addressed those units not included within the original LED programme, including conversion of all sign lighting and some subway lighting and bespoke lighting units.
- 3.29 The capital investment is to be used to address older subway lighting and ageing high mast lighting columns, including improving efficiency to reduce energy consumption, reduce energy costs and lower carbon levels.
- 3.30 Street lighting continues to be managed according to Highways asset management principles, inventory management and life cycle planning will be managed using the lighting module of the WDM system to coordinate with the pavement management and roads maintenance system. The system support in future will be web based self-serve reporting of street lighting faults via a dedicated portal, improving customer reporting and reducing the reliance on the current communication channels.
- 3.31 The Council reviewed its streetlighting specifications to reduce the brightness of the LED lanterns from 4,000k (kelvin), to 3,000k and below to reduce environmental impact.

Lead Local Flood Alleviation Grant (LLFA) Funding (£100,000)

- 3.32 The capital investment programme will address minor flooding / ponding issues experienced within the Borough, including ponding at pedestrian dropped kerb crossings, historic poor drainage during intensive rainfall events, and small 'pocket garden' style installations to reduce the risk of flooding, improve biodiversity and improve water quality.

No announcement has yet been made by DEFRA on the Lead Local Flood Alleviation grant for 2026/27. However, should appropriate funding become available this will be reported accordingly to a future Housing Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee or Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee as appropriate.

- 3.33 There are several costly flood risk/surface water management priority schemes identified for Reading under the 'Local Flood Risk Management Strategy' and the 'Surface Water Management Plan'. However, given that these are very costly schemes and, unfortunately, are unsupported by appropriate funding at this moment in time, it is highly unlikely that they will form part of the 2026/27 works programme. It is noted that responsibility for Main Rivers (Rivers Thames & Kennet) and 'Critical Ordinary Water Courses' (COW) remains with the Environment Agency. The Council are responsible for 'Ordinary Water Courses' and ditches.
- 3.34 Any future Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) grant will be used to address high flood risk sites and protect vulnerable properties. The Council will continue to carry out the annual ditch cleaning programme and to investigate/progress further schemes identified through flood modelling. A detailed list of works/schemes will be presented to this Committee for approval at a future meeting during the year to keep Councillors updated.

Highway Maintenance Delivery Update 2025/2026

- 3.35 During 2025/26 the Council has carried out an extensive works programme of carriageway resurfacing, carriageway preservation surfacing, surfacing of unclassified 'U' residential roads, footway/pavement resurfacing, streetlighting replacement of ageing

columns and LED lantern replacement, as well as a bridges/structural maintenance programme.

Year- 4 of the Council's 5-Year Capital Investment in Local Roads & Pavements

- 3.36 The Council awarded competitive tenders to deliver up to 185 local residential 'micro asphalt' and 'warm mix asphalt' major roads, including concrete road surfacing, over a 2-year period (2024/26), with 80 major roads and 20 residential micro roads delivered during 2025/26, Appendix 1 refers.
- 3.37 The Highways & Drainage (H&D) in-house operations team carried out extensive pre-patching in advance of the residential road surfacing programme. Any defect that warranted attention, irrespective of its depth was repaired, thereby providing added structural integrity to the road construction.
- 3.38 It was intended to focus the Council's Capital Investment Programme on resurfacing and/or reconstructing damaged pavements/stretches of pavement in 2025/2026 using the Council's in-house Highway Teams, as they are a competitive and cost-effective team who are experienced in delivering patching and minor road and pavement schemes.
- 3.39 The residential pavement / footway schemes programme commenced in early April 2025 and is due for completion by the end of March 2026, refer to Appendix 1.

Bridge/Structural Maintenance - Financed by the annual DfT LTP Award (2025/26)

- 3.40 A range of schemes were completed including strengthening and refurbishment of the Orbit Footbridge, application of footway anti-slip material on Reading Bridge Footways, bridge inspections and assessments, managing the abnormal loads, planned maintenance and reactive maintenance response.
- 3.41 Appendix 1 refers to the works programme delivered by the Highway Maintenance 2025/2026 award from the DfT Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement.
- 3.42 Appendix 1 satisfies the Grant Determination requirements on the use of the funding allocation by the DfT for Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) 2025/2026 settlement.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 4.2 The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

- 4.3 These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value

- Collaborating with others
- 4.4 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in our Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 5.2 A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests a 'net medium positive' impact arising from adoption of the Transport Strategy.
- 5.3 The Council is committed to a tree planting programme to increase canopy cover, improve biodiversity and reduce localised flooding. The Council continues to commit Highways Capital Programmes towards this initiative.
- 5.4 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. The Council will regularly review design standards, in conjunction with industry bodies, to take into account the extreme weather events (both extreme heat and extreme cold) to ensure sustainability of the public highway network.

6. Community Engagement and Information

- 6.1 The public can report highway defects to the Council via the Council's Web Page [Report a road or street problem - Reading Borough Council](#), the 'Love Clean Reading App', or by email Highways@reading.gov.uk. These include drains, streetlights, road and structures condition concerns, which are assessed and included within the annual review of the highway assets that inform the 'Annual Status and Option Reports' (ASOR) with the proposed high priority schemes brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 6.2 An extensive Communications Strategy was developed to inform residents of the investment and improvement by the Council at the start of year1 local residential roads and pavement programme and has been implemented in each subsequent year. The Communications Plan included residents' letters, an infographic to visually explain the surfacing process, as well as a colouring competition. An extensive and proactive social media strategy continues to be undertaken by the Council's Communication Team.
- 6.3 An annual review of the communication strategy is carried out following feedback from residents and Local Ward Councillors and a 'lessons learnt' exercise is carried out each year following the resurfacing programme and improvements incorporated within future work programmes

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The Highway Maintenance programme 2026/2027 consists of improvement work to the Council's existing public highway network and will be making improvements to existing highway assets. The Council recognise that Reading is an older town and will continue to invest in pedestrian dropped kerb crossings at junctions as part of the capital investment programmes to improve access for all residents of Reading and users of the public highway.

7.3 There is no overall change to service delivery at this time, and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

There are no other relevant issues to report

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safe passage along a highway.

9.2 The Council as Lead Local Flood Authority, has a duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to reduce the risk of flooding.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The Highway Maintenance Programme 2026/2027 (Spending Table Item 3.9 refers) will be fully funded by the following:

- Year – 5 of the £8M Council Funded 5-Year (2022-2027) Residential Roads & Pavements Investment Programme
- The Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement for 2026/2027).
- The DEFRA Lead Local Flood Alleviation Grant (LLFA) Funding 2026/2027 (tbc).
- The capital works programmes will be tendered via open public tender to achieve procurement compliance in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, value for money for Reading.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Tenders for the road resurfacing programmes will be advertised in Spring 2026 and awarded early June 2026 to ensure works are carried out during the drier summer months.

11.2 The delivery of the 'Roads Resurfacing and Surfacing' programme will be during the 2026/27 financial year.

11.3 Delivery of the Capital Bridges programme will be during the 2026/27 Financial Year.

12. Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: 2025/26 Programme Delivered

2. Appendix 2: Proposed 2026/27 Delivery Programme